

Matthews, Herbert
SOCY.OL.2 Revolution:
Cuba
P-Klein, J.K.

books

"REVOLUTION IN CUBA"

By Herbert Matthews

Charles Scribner & Son, 468 pages, \$15.

By J.K. KLEIN

Many books have been written in recent years on the subject of Cuba and interpretations spring forth from every point along the political spectrum.

Here are four recent books worth reading. The expert may find them little more than a general review, but they are all rewarding for one reason or another. Some will answer questions, others will pose new ones. Some can be accepted at face value; others serve as a reminder that there are those who wish to revise history for their own purposes.

"Revolution in Cuba" is a classic work by a retired New York Times correspondent. It traces the development of Cuba from the time of Columbus. Matthews' major focus, however, is on 1950-75, including Batista's rise and fall; Fidel's role in the guerrilla victory and Cuba's development since then. Matthews has spent a considerable amount of time in Cuba (more than 10 visits) and adds unique insight based on the personal relationship he has developed with Fidel beginning with his visits to the "barbudos"

(bearded ones) in the Sierra Macstra mountains during 1957-58.

While accenting his sympathetic, liberal attitudes regarding Cuba's revolution, Matthews paints the Cuban people as victims as well as victors. Although they have experienced struggles and failures, the Cubans accept it. They appear to view hard times as the periodic rough seas that threaten their efforts to steer their own course.

Particularly informative are the sections on Fidel's background, his path towards Marxism-Leninism, the role of the party in Cuba's growth and the eventual merging of Fidel's goals with those of the old-guard Cuban Communist Party (CCP). As Matthews sees it, "Castro became a Communist but Cuban Communism became Castroite."

The book also attempts to analyze the role of such important people as Che Guevara and Raul Castro; to appraise efforts to spread the revolution to Africa and parts of Latin America, including Che's fatal attempts in Bolivia, and to evaluate Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union, the U.S. and countries such as China and Japan.

Sections on the U.S. also deal with CIA infiltration in Cuba, the role of Cuban exiles and a variety of assassination attempts in both countries. Several chapters familiarize the reader with internal mechanisms of Cuba, its problems and advancements in the areas of housing, education, religion, discrimination, public health and an economy that refuses to be tamed. Particularly fascinating are the areas dealing with the phrase: "For those within the Revolution, complete freedom; for those against the Revolution, no freedom." This chapter, with his historical appraisal of such headline-grabbing trials as that of poet Herbert Padilla, will, perhaps, introduce a new

consciousness to the reader. Also enlightening are sections on People's Power, currently being introduced in Cuba through the establishment of elected assemblies from the neighborhood to national level. Explanations of mass organizations and their role in Cuban life are also worthwhile. The incredible amount of information in the book and the enthusiasm with which it is written are a tease, beckoning the reader to learn more about Cuba and its continuous struggle for success through a Marxist revolution that refuses to sacrifice its nationalist interests.